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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MUSCAT 002111

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR NEA/PI, EUR/ERA, E (JTURNER, DMORRISON)
ABU DHABI FOR MEPI: H. WECHSEL

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TAGS: [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [KMPI](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MU](#)

SUBJECT: OMAN: US-EU DIALOGUE ON MIDDLE EAST REFORM

REF: A. STATE 235816

[1](#)B. MUSCAT 02050

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The Dutch Ambassador (EU Representative) reports having received no instructions from Brussels on quarterly BMENA coordination meetings with the U.S. (ref A). Furthermore, there will be no EU funds earmarked for Oman before 2007 at the earliest. Only seven EU states have missions in Muscat, and each of them manages their limited assistance programs on a purely bilateral basis. Nevertheless, the Dutch will undertake to coordinate an EU-US meeting in the first quarter of 2005. Prior consultations with the UK Embassy (the most BMENA-active local EU-member mission) revealed difficulties in securing funding and overcoming challenges dealing with the Omani bureaucracy. End Summary.

European Disunion

[1](#)2. (U) Per ref B, Pol/E Chief met with the Dutch Ambassador (current EU representative in Oman) on December 1. Ambassador Annelies Boogaerdt reported having received no instructions from Brussels requesting EU-US coordination meetings. As the chief representative of the 7 EU embassies in Oman (for the current Dutch and upcoming Luxembourg presidencies), however, she offered to organize future quarterly meetings beginning in early 2005 to coordinate European Union Strategic Partnership (EUSP) and MEPI programs at the deputies level. Both Pol/E Chief and Ambassador Boogaerdt agreed to share outlines of current assistance programs in Oman for the next meeting.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Ambassador Boogaerdt noted that there are currently no EUSP funds for Oman from Brussels, nor any envisioned in the next two years. Moreover, the EU pays more attention to its North African "back yard" rather than the distant Gulf. Consequently, Ambassador Boogaerdt continues to promote her modest Dutch assistance programs in Oman on a purely bilateral basis, as do the other resident European missions. She also said that her annual assistance budget (increasing threefold to \$50,000 in 2005), and limited personnel, primarily support awareness and development programs in the health (HIV/AIDS) sector. Encountering a similar obstacle as MEPI, Ambassador Boogaerdt said that Omani government prefers that the Dutch programs eschew the EUSP label.

UK's Limited Success

[1](#)4. (SBU) EmbOffs conferred with UK Embassy colleagues on assistance programs in October, as part of an informal and irregular consultative process. UK DCM and PolOff noted that they have no country-specific budget for Oman, but rather compete for regional projects on a case-by-case basis. They had focused a number of programs on human resources development with both the Ministry of Manpower and the Ministry of Civil Service that have been bogged down in the Omani bureaucracy. Discussions with the Omani Attorney General are ongoing on a needs assessment for training and technical assistance. Whereas the USG has had a successful program (through IRI) of professional staff development at the Majlis al-Shura (Oman's elected quasi-legislature), the UK has succeeded in engaging Shura members on a peer level through a multi-party parliamentary group from the House of Commons. The UK MPs have established a standing bilateral committee in the Commons chaired by MP Alan Duncan, and are considering offering clinics to Shura members on issues such as constituent relations and managing district offices. Like the USG, the UK Embassy works with Omani civil society groups to help build their capacity.

Comment

[1](#)5. (SBU) The EU missions in Muscat are limited both in number, size, and funding. There appears to be little

coordination re their bilateral assistance programs. Like us, they seem to grapple with limited funding (often designed on a regional rather than country-specific basis), a shortage of staff with which to implement programs, and difficulties navigating a somewhat suspicious Omani bureaucracy. We will encourage greater information sharing, ideally on a quarterly basis, but expect the European programs collectively to lag behind USG efforts in Oman.

BALTIMORE